result any perceived inefficiency in the existing postal sector and it provides for registration of private couriers only. The Bill has since been referred to the Standing Committee of Parliament Information Technology.

(e) The Department of Posts is not aware of any such problem.

(f) Opening and upgradation of post offices in Kerala Circle is subject to fulfilment prescribed norms and availability of resources.

Withdrawal of STD facility

†2235. PROF. RAM DEO BHANDARY: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether STD facility was given to the Members of the Telephone Advisory Committee;

(b) whether this facility has not been withdrawn;

(c) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(d) by when the said facility would be restored after reconsideration by Government?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRIMATI SUMITRA MAHAJAN): (a) to (d) No, Sir. STD is not provided on Telephone Advisory Committee (TAC) telephones. However, in some individual cases STD facility was provided on specific request. The matter has already been examined and it has been decided not to provide this facility on TAC telephones.

Merger of MTNL and BSNL

2236. SHRI P.K. MAHESHWARI: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to refer to answer to Unstarred Question 916 given in the Rajya Sabha on the 28th November, 2002 and state:

(a) whether the process of identifying the consultant who can advise DoT on the modalities of the merger has already been started

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

by the Telecom Commission;

(b) whether any consultant has been appointed by Government;

(c) if so, the details thereof alongwith the criterion adopted by Government to appoint the consultant, and the details of the companies who had applied for this purpose; and

(d) by when this process is likely to be completed?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRIMATI SUMITRA MAHAJAN): (a) to (d) Some consultations and presentations have been started to determine best arrangement for maximizing the synergies between MTNL & BSNL. The Government has not appointed any consultant so far.

E-post in Karnataka

2237. SHRI K. B. KRISHNA MURTHY: Will the Minister of COMMUNICA-TIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal to launch E-Post in Karnataka;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the details of the new initiatives taken by the Department of Posts in the State during the year 2002-03?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICA-TIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SANJAY PASWAN): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The Department proposes to launch e-post in Karnataka Circle depending upon the availability of computers, internet connectivity in the stations selected and development of other related infrastructure.

(c) Speednet providing track & trace facility for Speed Post has been extended to Bagalkot, Bidar, Bijapur, Gadag, Sirsi and Chikmagalur Post Offices in Karnataka Circle during the year 2002-2003. E-bill post services have been extended to 20 more post offices in Bangalore City.

Further, Western Union Money Transfer Service was extended to 220 post offices and the facility of Multipurpose Counter Machines was expanded to 36 post offices.